

## Chapter 9: Towards a Viable EU–Gulf Engagement: Qatari Perceptions of the EU and Its Policies in the Region

The rise of Qatar as an emerging power and an effective power-broker in the Middle East has carried the country beyond its sarcastic categorization as the small ‘oil well state’ of the Arabian Peninsula. Indeed, the small Emirate of the Persian Gulf sandwiched between the two regional rivals—Iran and Saudi Arabia—has extensively increased its power-projection capabilities in the past decade. Qatar has also been working to become more engaged with international powers and several institutions including the EU to become a significant actor in the Middle East and beyond.

Qatar’s relations with the EU have historically developed within the framework of the GCC, and Qatar has steadily forged dialogue with EU countries over constructive economic relations. As an important trading partner for European countries, Qatar’s relationship with the EU is expected to become further enhanced in the coming decades as it attempts to diversify its economy beyond its gas reserves. Relations are expected to improve as a consequence of the EU’s position in the Gulf crisis, while Qatar is an important player in a possible security architecture in the region.

This chapter aims to reflect the perceptions of the local elites in Qatar regarding the EU in general, and its policies in the MENA and the Mediterranean region. In view of this objective, the chapter introduces the argument that the EU is not perceived as a power that could offer security guarantees to its neighbourhood including the Mediterranean. The Qatari perception at elite level also reflects the view that the countries settled around the Union’s ‘periphery’ prioritize socio-economic development more than security and defence when they deal with the EU, a trend also

relevant for Qatar. It should be noted that the local elites did not offer a broad perception on the Mediterranean issues, and focused on country-specific issues instead.

This chapter will investigate perceptions on the political, social, and economic problems that Qatar faces, as well as its geopolitical challenges, and will try to understand whether the EU is perceived as an influential stakeholder that can deal with these issues successfully. The chapter will also focus on the main policy areas for co-operation between the EU and Qatar, reflecting the local elites' ideas regarding the policy issues/areas in which the EU can be more effective.

The first section of the chapter offers a background analysis on Qatar in general, and sheds light on the country's relations with Europe. The second section is dedicated to analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted as part of the elite survey which seeks to reflect the elite discourse in Qatar towards the EU and its practices in the larger Mediterranean, including the Gulf, that would contribute in designing a future role for the Union as a 'responsive' actor.<sup>1</sup> Compiled in line with the survey design described in the Introduction, the data introduced and discussed in the second section is based on a fieldwork study conducted in Doha, Qatar in January 2018 (see Methodology). The chapter ends with a reflective conclusion with policy recommendations on the future of EU–Qatar relations as well as the EU's role in the Mediterranean, and particularly in the Gulf region.

## 1. Country profile of Qatar

### 1.1 *Demographics and country profile*

The emirate of Qatar has risen to regional and international prominence over the past twenty years, in large part because of its ambitions to become an economic power and fully integrated component of the

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1 Daniela Huber and Maria Cristina Paciello, 'Bringing Social Justice and Human Rights Back In', in *MEDRESET Working Papers*, No. 11 (May 2018), <http://www.medreset.eu/?p=13540>.

international system as well as a key geopolitical actor. A country of roughly 2.5 million people (of which Qatari nationals are estimated to comprise 10 to percent),<sup>2</sup> since the 1973 oil boom Qatar has moved to import labour migrants in order to remedy shortages in the labour market, like other Gulf states. Indeed, the objective then, as it still is today, was to be less dependent on labour migrants by equipping Qatari nationals through investments in education and professional training.<sup>3</sup> These efforts have yielded limited results and the country remains heavily dependent on immigrants, taking the country's population from less than 700,000 in 2003, to an estimated 2.5 million in 2016.

In the 1980s, Qatar's economy suffered as a result of the oil glut, leading to efforts by Qatari decision-makers to invest more heavily in natural gas. While Qatar has significant petroleum reserves—Qatar's proven oil reserves exceed 25 billion barrels, and its natural gas reserves are the world's third largest—it has significantly more gas, a natural resource that has historically been fraught with greater development challenges as its exportation required massive pipeline infrastructures. With the emergence of new technologies in the 1980s, the government decided to invest heavily in liquefied natural gas (LNG) and, thanks also to a partnership between state-owned Qatar Petroleum, ExxonMobil, and Total, Qatar became the world's largest LNG-exporting country from 2010 to 2015 and its wealth accordingly increased exponentially.<sup>4</sup>

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2 The non-nationals comprise around 80 percent of the population, from countries including the Philippines, India, Nepal, Egypt, and Bangladesh. See the website of the Qatar Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics: *Monthly Figures on Total Population*, <https://www.mdps.gov.qa/en/statistics1/StatisticsSite/Pages/Population.aspx>. See also Jure Snoj, *Population of Qatar by Nationality: 2017 Report*, Priya Dsouza Communications, 7 February 2017, <http://priyadsouza.com/?p=54667>.

3 The first Qatari census, taken in 1970, put the indigenous population at 45,039. For Qatar's 2030 vision, see: Qatar's Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, *Qatar National Vision 2030*, July 2008, <https://www.mdps.gov.qa/en/qnv1>.

4 Qatar remains the world's largest LNG-exporting country, accounting for around 28 percent of global trade by exporting 81 million tonnes in 2016. For more, see International Gas Union (IGU), *2018 World LNG Report*, June 2018, p. 7, [https://www.igu.org/sites/default/files/node-document-field\\_file/IGU\\_LNG\\_2018\\_0.pdf](https://www.igu.org/sites/default/files/node-document-field_file/IGU_LNG_2018_0.pdf).

While Qatar is heavily dependent on oil and gas, the ruling al-Thani family—which has governed the country since its independence from Britain in 1971—has placed investment emphasis on infrastructure, health care, and education, particularly since Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani came to power in 2013. After winning its bid to host the 2022 World Cup, the government expedited large infrastructure projects including roads, light rail transportation, a new port, stadiums, and other sporting facilities.<sup>5</sup> International human rights organizations including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch criticized Qatar, drawing attention to the labour abuse and exploitation faced by the migrant labourers recruited to build and service World Cup stadiums in Qatar.<sup>6</sup> Since oil and gas account for over 50 percent of government revenue, Qatar remains vulnerable to external shocks, including global energy demand and prices as well as geopolitical challenges emanating in a region that is fraught with political tumult and conflict.

## 1.2 Geopolitics

With its financial power, alliances with the West and proactive engagement with conflicts in the MENA region, the Gulf has assumed an unprecedented geopolitical role as states across the region have been weakened and many of the Gulf's historic rivals from Saddam Hussein—removed from power in 2003—to Muammar Gaddafi and Bashar al-Assad have either been ousted or suffered considerable decline.<sup>7</sup>

When the Arab uprisings erupted in 2011, Qatar found itself in a somewhat unique position where there was limited, if any prospect, of domestic economic and political grievances emerging at a time of immense upheaval for the region at large. What set Qatar apart in

5 Heritage Foundation website: *Index of Economic Freedom: Qatar*, <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/qatar>.

6 Amnesty International, *Qatar: Abuse of Migrant Workers Remains Widespread As World Cup Stadium Hosts First Match*, 18 May 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/05/qatar-world-cup-stadium-first-match>.

7 Toby Matthiesen, 'Conservative Monarchies in a Transforming Region', in Valeria Talbot (ed.), *The Rising Gulf. The New Ambitions of the Gulf Monarchies*, Novi Ligure, Epoké, 2015, p. 26, <https://www.ispionline.it/en/node/13880>.

2011 from its Gulf neighbours was the absence of significant political demands among Qatari nationals: ‘Even in the outwardly similar extreme rentier case of the UAE, pockets of relative poverty and deprivation existed among the national population that could (and did) generate socio-economic discontent and political dissent.’<sup>8</sup> Per capita levels of GDP among Qataris exceeded 440,000 dollars, thereby insulating Qatar from the unrest. Moreover, an annual Arab Youth Survey found that the proportion of Qatari respondents who ranked democracy as important more than halved from 68 percent in 2008 to just 33 percent in 2010, which contrasted with the polling in neighbouring UAE where the proportion of respondents who stated that democracy was important rose substantially, from 58 percent in 2008 to 75 percent in 2011.<sup>9</sup>

Political, economic, and social comfort at home positioned Qatar strongly as it moved to cement its status as a key regional actor amid the conflict and transitions unfolding in the region. Qatar positioned itself by taking a stand against the authoritarians of the region as they resisted domestic protests and unrest.<sup>10</sup> Under Qatar’s presidency, the Arab League sanctioned the move to actively engage in the overthrow of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Such a decision presented Qatar and the League’s members with an opportunity to bridge the regional and international communities following the League’s largely passive role in previous international interventions.<sup>11</sup>

In 2011, the Doha Debates—a forum to discuss major political issues in the region—commissioned an opinion poll of 1,000 people in 16 Arab states. The survey revealed that 75 percent of Arabs wanted to see Colonel Muammar Gaddafi forcibly removed from power.<sup>12</sup> However, while the Libya Operation and the Gulf’s subsequent efforts to overthrow

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8 Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Arab Spring*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 104.

9 Ibid.

10 Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, ‘Qatar and the Arab Spring. Policy Drivers and Regional Implications’, in *Carnegie Papers*, September 2014, <http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/?fa=56723>.

11 Ibid.

12 The Doha Debates, *This House Believes Arabs, Not NATO, Should Be Dealing with Libya*, 18 April 2011, <https://archive.dohadebates.com/debates/item/index161b.html?d=103>.

the Assad regime may have provided the Arab world with a new lease on life, this actually was more about the power-shift among regional actors, with instability in Egypt and Syria permitting Saudi and Qatari dominance, than any renewed 'Arab' character in regional politics.<sup>13</sup>

Qatar's response was not simply due to its presidency of the League but was the result of a series of policy manoeuvres that predated the 2011 unrest. Since the 1990s, successive Qatari governments have aimed to strengthen the country's regional geopolitical standing. Its foreign policy has focused on mediation and conflict resolution. Doha assumed the role of mediator in almost every regional conflict: from Sudan to Eritrea, Lebanon to Palestine, and Somalia to Yemen.<sup>14</sup> The decision to throw its weight behind Islamists after the 2011 uprisings also represented the culmination of longer-term developments.<sup>15</sup> Qatar offered refuge to Islamists and political dissidents from across the Arab and Islamic world and established strong ties with the international Brotherhood movement as it welcomed members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood fleeing persecution in Nasser's Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s and in Syria after Hafiz al-Assad's massacre of the group in Hama in 1982. As in other Gulf countries such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, many of the newcomers worked as teachers and civil servants and effectively shaped the political views of a generation of youth across the Gulf.<sup>16</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the Arab uprisings, regional actors filled the vacuum and gambled on conflicted factions. The role of the

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- 13 Christopher Phillips, 'The Arabism Debate and the Arab Uprisings', in *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2014), pp. 141-144.
- 14 Jamal Abdullah, 'Analysis: Qatar's Foreign Policy – The Old and the New', in *Al Jazeera*, 18 November 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/11/analysis-qatar-foreign-policy--2014111811274147727.html>; Sultan Barakat, 'Qatari Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement', in *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Papers*, No. 12 (November 2014), <http://brook.gs/2bRAKqU>.
- 15 Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, 'The Rationale and Implications of Qatar's Intervention in Libya', in Dag Henriksen and Ann Karin Larssen (eds), *Political Rationale and International Consequences of the War in Libya*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 118-133.
- 16 Ibid. See also David B. Roberts, 'Qatar, the Ikhwan, and Transnational Relations in the Gulf', in 'Visions of Gulf Security', in *POMEPS Studies*, No. 7 (25 March 2014), pp. 22-26, <https://pomeps.org/?p=4644>.

Muslim Brotherhood emerged as a central focus as Qatar (and Turkey) identified Brotherhood factions as an opportunity to expand and consolidate their influence in the post-2011 transitions. Qatar appeared to gamble on the ascendancy of political Islam, subsequently triggering strong reactions from its Gulf neighbours in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, who view the Brotherhood as a threat. Qatar consequently found itself increasingly at odds with the two powerful Gulf countries in the years that followed the post-2011 conflicts.

The differences intensified in 2014 after Saudi Arabia and the UAE withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani agreed to demands related to Doha's alleged support for political Islam and the criticism of fellow GCC members regarding Al Jazeera, which was accused of broadcasting anti-Saudi programmes.<sup>17</sup> Saudi King Salman, who ascended to the throne in 2015, sought to bring Qatar back into the fold in support of the kingdom's rivalry with Iran.<sup>18</sup> The 2014 accord, however, proved to be inconclusive and in 2017, Qatar became embroiled in a fresh round of tensions with its Gulf neighbours, including Egypt, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain (the 'Quartet'), which imposed a land and air blockade and demanded that Qatar end its ties with Iran and Islamist organizations and close down media channel Al Jazeera, among ten other demands.<sup>19</sup>

Shortly thereafter, the impact of the blockade was eased when Qatar received support from Turkey and Iran. To reach a settlement in the Gulf crisis, Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad also showed his commitment to mediate talks, while at the international level, the US and the EU joined the mediation efforts. The EU has played a mediating role in the crisis, with multiple European leaders shuttling between the Gulf countries to forge a resolution, and High Representative Federica Mogherini noting a 'clear risk of the situation escalating further and spreading in an unpleasant and dangerous manner beyond the region

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17 Ian Black, 'Arab States Withdraw Ambassadors from Qatar in Protest at "Interference"', in *The Guardian*, 5 March 2014, <https://gu.com/p/3na3c>.

18 Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, 'Qatar and the Arab Spring. Policy Drivers and Regional Implications', cit.

19 'The 13 Demands on Qatar from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE and Egypt', in *The National*, 23 June 2017, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/1.93329>.

of the Gulf, be it in Africa, or in Southeast Asia or in the Middle East'. A significant proportion of EU–Gulf exports reach Qatar through the Saudi border and a number of EU companies operate directly or through joint ventures across the Gulf, many of which have been assigned major infrastructural or business projects. Europe has, therefore, firmly supported a peaceful mediation effort and has shown its support for the Kuwaiti diplomatic initiative.<sup>20</sup>

Economically, Qatar could sustain the impact of the blockade but not indefinitely. By the end of July 2017, Doha had ploughed 40 billion of its 340 billion dollar sovereign wealth fund into local banks, while also selling off stakes in several foreign companies. Tourism has also been impacted, as has the number of passengers carried by the Qatari national airline, which dropped by 10 percent when the row unfolded. Although Turkey and Iran filled the import void, food and beverage prices climbed 4.5 percent in comparison to 2016. Qatar has approximately 340 billion dollars in reserves to address the negative impacts on its economy.

### 1.3 Overview of Qatar–EU relations

The EU and the GCC have been interacting since the early 1980s. The first joint ministerial meeting between the GCC and the EU's predecessor, the European Community, was held in 1985 and was followed by further rounds of negotiations. These led to the signing of a Co-operation Agreement on 15 June 1988, which was expected to provide 'a broad basis of cooperation on all aspects relevant to bilateral relations'.<sup>21</sup> Yet, it is argued that the EU–GCC Co-operation Agreement reflected a European policy of promoting regionalism in international

20 Stasa Salacanian, 'Europe and the Gulf Crisis', in *Al Jazeera Center for Studies Reports*, 4 September 2017, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2017/09/europe-gulf-crisis-170904124324515.html>. See also Jon Gambrell, 'Qatar Says Kuwait Trying to Mediate Gulf Crisis with Arab Neighbours', in *The Star*, 6 June 2017, <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2017/06/06/qatar-says-kuwait-trying-to-mediate-gulf-crisis-with-arab-neighbours.html>.

21 Giacomo Luciani and Tobias Schumacher, 'Relations between the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council States: Past Record and Promises for the Future', in *GRC Research Papers*, 2004, p. 26.

relations. This means that the EU has exclusively focused its efforts on a region-to-region basis, to the detriment of bilateral relations between the EU and the six Gulf countries.<sup>22</sup>

However, the tangible goal of establishing a free trade agreement has never materialized. Indeed, scholars point out that the GCC falls on the periphery of the EU's external relations, despite more than twenty years of negotiations, which has been attributed to 'institutional, structural, material, and normative reasons'.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, free trade negotiations did pave the way for region-to-region co-operation and intensification of interactions on political and security issues.

Various attempts to revive the Co-operation Agreement have met with partial success; in 1995, an EU initiative looked to strengthen EU–GCC relations in terms of 'decentralized co-operation' and a regular political dialogue, but its results were limited. The free trade negotiations which were relaunched in 2002 on a more comprehensive basis have yet have to be concluded. At the 2004 joint council meeting it was agreed that both parties would refocus their activities on a limited number of areas, including the free trade area, business matters, and energy co-operation.<sup>24</sup>

The limited EU–Gulf co-operation in the Mediterranean has been characterized by a lack of sufficient European policy instruments that can move beyond the donor–recipient relationship the EU has with other regions in the Arab world, such as North Africa and the Levant. New forms of financing and project management have yet to be established, while the Gulf itself has failed to embrace the potential of joint co-operation initiatives. The EU has concentrated its efforts on North Africa and the Middle East and not the Arabian Peninsula because of its geography. The Euro-Med dialogue, Barcelona Process, Neighbourhood Policy, and Union for the Med have all been designed as instruments to

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22 Ibid.

23 Valentina Kostadinova, 'What is the Status of the EU-GCC Relationship?', in *GRC Gulf Papers*, 2013, p. 13, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/publications/publication.html/167338>.

24 Steffen Hertog, 'EU-GCC Relations in the Era of the Second Oil Boom', in *CAP Working Papers*, December 2007, <https://www.cap-lmu.de/publikationen/2007/hertog.php>.

deal with the southern neighbourhood—an approach that has excluded the Gulf.

In 2003–2004, the EU declared its intention to link EU–GCC co-operation with its broader Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, but this idea was not implemented particularly vigorously. The EU’s 2004 ‘Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East’ suggested that the EU would consider bilateral engagement with individual Gulf states wishing to co-operate on issues of reform. As of now, the Strategic Partnership largely remains a ‘hollow framework’ as EU states have different interests and priorities within the region.<sup>25</sup>

The Gulf is the fifth-largest EU trading partner and an important destination for exports and investments. In 2014, trade between the EU and the Gulf reached 148 billion dollars, up from 100 billion dollars in 2010. The Gulf, as a whole, has experienced a boom in international prominence and assertiveness since the 2008 financial crisis and the 2011 unrest. The financial crisis saw the cash-rich Gulf countries acquire further inroads into the cash-poor economies of Europe, while also shaping and influencing events in the conflict-ridden countries of the region.

Qatar is the prime supplier of LNG to a number of European countries, particularly the UK and Italy,<sup>26</sup> and as demand rises over the coming decades, Qatar’s importance as an LNG trading partner will increase. The country is believed to have invested around 35 billion pounds in the UK. British exports of goods to Qatar rose from 1.31 billion pounds in 2013 to 2.13 billion pounds in 2016. Apart from property, Qatar is also a major shareholder in Barclays, injecting capital into the bank during the 2008 financial crisis and saving it from a government bailout.<sup>27</sup> Doha is a favoured location for UK military liaison and co-ordination activities in

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25 Ibid, p. 5.

26 Howard Rogers, ‘Qatar LNG: New Trading Patterns But No Cause for Alarm’, in *Oxford Energy Comments*, June 2017, p. 2, <https://www.oxfordenergy.org/?p=30459>. See also Adam Vaughan, ‘Qatar Crisis Highlights Rising UK Energy Reliance on Imports’, in *The Guardian*, 8 June 2017, <https://gu.com/p/6tdzv>.

27 Ben Moshinsky, ‘The Crisis in Qatar Has Come at a Terrible Time for the UK’, in *Business Insider*, 12 June 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.nl/qatar-ik-economic-trade-ties-2017-6>.

the Gulf. Others such as France are also strongly aligned with the Gulf, with former President François Hollande becoming the first Western leader to attend a GCC leaders' summit. Qatar–EU ties have increasingly become focused around mutual security interests, including the sharing of intelligence, stabilization and reconstruction efforts in conflict-ridden countries within the MENA region, the war on IS and Qatar's capacity to host European military installations and personnel. Since the war on IS unfolded in 2014, the Gulf states have augmented their military capacity by purchasing arms from Europe and the US.

## 2. Elite Survey: Research findings on Qatar

### 2.1 *Methodology*

The findings introduced in this chapter are based on the elite survey, which was conducted with 12 respondents in Doha, Qatar in January 2018. The interviewees were chosen using the institutional network of the research team, and also based on the criteria provided in the conceptual framework set for the elite survey.<sup>28</sup> Although the research team tried to raise the number of interviewees, some potential respondents informed the team of their unavailability.

The in-depth interviews conducted for the elite survey involved respondents aged between 25 and 50, from different professional backgrounds including academics and researchers at universities, state officials, journalists, civil society organization representatives and economists. There were also expatriates among the interviewees (see Annex for the list of the interviewees).

The researchers attempted to maintain a balanced approach in terms of gender in the selection of interviewees; however, the lack of representation of women at the elite level was observed during the

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28 See Zeynep Gülöz Bakır and Gülşah Dark, 'Review of Surveys on Euro-Mediterranean Relations...', cit.

interviews as well as during the fieldwork arrangements (see Annex). The research was however still able to compile data related to gender issues.

The fieldwork study was conducted by three experts at PODEM, including the author, and all interviewees were informed by email about the project concept before the actual interviews took place. The interviews were based on note-taking and none of the interviewees were recorded. Each interview took between 30 minutes and 1 hour and followed the structure and questions that were provided to the research team.

## *2.2 Perception on Qatar's relation with EU member states and the EU in general*

One main finding retained from the interviews in Doha is the marked absence of a unified notion on the EU in general, which could be attributed to Qatar's engagement with the Union on a region-to-region basis within the framework of the GCC. On the other hand, a higher awareness on Qatar's relations with single member states, notably as the UK, was understood during the interviews, together with France and Germany, whose presence has recently become more visible.

From a historical standpoint, the UK is perceived as a key EU country for Qatar due to the dominant British influence in the country since it gained independence from the UK in 1971. It was in the 1990s that France also began to influence the tiny Arab emirate. A senior academic drew attention to the historic perspective of the British recognition of Qatar. The academic mentioned that all rulers in the region except those of Saudi Arabia came to power through a deal with the UK. In other words, the UK is seen a kind of 'big brother' to the rulers in the Gulf states, and this is also the case for Qatar.<sup>29</sup> The respondents further pointed to the fact that a majority of Qatari senior officials received education in the UK.<sup>30</sup> At an economic level, Qatar is seen as closer to the UK than to the EU per se.

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29 Interviewee 4: Senior academic, male, Doha, January 2018.

30 The UK is also a popular education destination for students from Qatar. See 'Over 3,000 students from Qatar studying in the UK', in *The Peninsula*, 12 March 2018, <https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/12/03/2018/Over-3,000-students-from-Qatar-studying-in-UK>.

Following the UK, France is the EU member state most frequently mentioned by the local elites. According to the same academic, France fully supports its business relations with Qatar, giving more priority to them than to those with Saudi Arabia: ‘Economic co-operation also facilitates political co-operation. Total’s engagement with Qatar is significant. Although the privileges given to Total cause some problems, especially on the principles of competition, Total has the full support of the government.’<sup>31</sup>

Regarding economic relations with the EU states specifically, a research analyst at a think-tank put forward the view that Europeans know Qataris much more than Americans: ‘On the European elite side, they see Qatar as a reasonable partner. EU officials have good eyes for Qatar. UK and Germany (e.g., Deutsche Bank) have good economic relations with the country.’<sup>32</sup> The domestic portfolio of Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) further demonstrates the presence of EU countries at an economic level: ‘The portfolio consists of listed foreign companies, real estate, domestic companies, safe haven assets and private equity. The safe haven assets, which are the largest part of the QIA portfolio, include treasury bonds from the UK and Germany.’<sup>33</sup>

Foreign direct investments in the country are relatively small as Qatar has historically fuelled itself through its gas reserves and attracted LNG technology investments. European energy giants like Total and Shell have a strong presence in the country, and France and the UK are also active in the real estate sector. Qataris are also engaged in investments in Asia and interested in fast-growing markets. Following the US, Qatar’s investments in Turkey are the second highest of any country.<sup>34</sup>

Qatar’s political relations with other EU countries are relatively more recent. As was pointed out by a Qatari diplomat, ‘Spain and Austria refused to open embassies in Qatar at first (and vice versa). In the early 2000s, Germany’s importance was understood.’<sup>35</sup>

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31 Interviewee 4: Senior academic, male, Doha, January 2018.

32 Interviewee 5: Economic research analyst, expatriate, male, Doha, January 2018.

33 Ibid.

34 Qatar’s investment in Turkey stands at 19 billion dollars, with more expected in the upcoming years.

35 Interviewee 1: Senior diplomat, male, Doha, January 2018.

It was further underlined that the progress with the EU as a whole is positive, although limited, because the EU has only recently been engaged with the country at the institutional level. In the words of the Qatari diplomat:

The Union [used to be] a potential role model for the Gulf. However, now there is the GCC crisis and the Union [has been] fragmented mainly because of the Brexit process. This is why it is hard to promote the EU as a role model to the region. The [current view] is that the perception toward the EU will be negatively affected when Brexit happens.<sup>36</sup>

Certain scepticism is also levelled at the EU as its integrity is seen to be challenged by lack of coherence among the member states as well as growing internal problems. This is also why co-operation with the EU is seen to be more attractive to Qatar and its society at the economic, social, and cultural levels, rather than the political level.

The interviews at the elite level clearly demonstrate that the engagement between the EU and Qatar is slowly becoming more visible through occasional official talks and bilateral visits. However, it can be noted that not many Qatari officials at the foreign ministry have an in-depth knowledge of the EU institutional framework. According to an academic, the lack of human capacity at the ministry has become more apparent with the Gulf crisis. It was said that a new generation of diplomats is coming but currently there is a lack of skilled personnel who can build ties with the West and the EU in moments of crisis.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, because the EU's relations with Qatar are largely based on economic exchanges, the EU is not viewed as a potential source of support against concrete security challenges.

It was further stressed that the country's principal expectations from the EU are firstly the establishment of a free trade area and secondly visa liberalization for Qatari citizens, as noted by the Qatari diplomat during the interviews.<sup>38</sup>

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36 Ibid.

37 Interviewee 4: Senior academic, male, Doha, January 2018.

38 Interviewee 1: Senior diplomat, male, Doha, January 2018.

### 2.3 *Gulf crisis: Implications, actors, and the role of the EU*

There was a common perception among the interviewees on the increasing mutual interest between the EU and Qatar following the Gulf crisis. An academic argued that the Gulf crisis created a sudden realization in Qatar of the importance of international affairs including relations with the EU, the Iran nuclear deal and so on: ‘The Gulf crisis was a wake-up call’.<sup>39</sup> The crisis is also said to have raised the EU’s interest in Qatar, which was previously more superficial.

Asked about the implications of and reactions to the diplomatic rift, several responses were generated during the interviews concerning the regional and international levels, while highlighting the role of each actor on the ground.

At the international level, the EU’s mediation efforts were appreciated, as the respondents pointed to EU High Representative Federica Mogherini’s nuanced stance and call for swift direct talks between Qatar and its neighbours. ‘The Union adopted a neutral stance; there have been increased visits between both sides in the aftermath.’<sup>40</sup>

It was further underlined by a senior think-tanker that at the onset of the crisis, the EU maintained a hesitant response, being unsure how to react. However, economic dynamics appear to have had a larger role in the EU’s decision as the country’s substantial gas reserves constitute an economic draw for the EU.<sup>41</sup> The EU’s mediation efforts in the standoff as well as supporting statements by EU member states are seen as an opportunity in the progress of EU–Qatar relations. In the words of the senior think-tanker:

‘Germany stepped in early in the crisis, suggesting that the boycott was unacceptable and called the parties to end the crisis through a diplomatic solution. This was followed by Italy, again calling for a solution through diplomatic channels. Even Nordic countries now know more about Qatar and there is more room for co-ordination between Qatar and the EU.’<sup>42</sup>

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39 Interviewee 4: Senior academic, male, Doha, January 2018.

40 Interviewee 1: Senior diplomat, male, Doha, January 2018.

41 Interviewee 11: Director of a research institute, male, Doha, January 2018.

42 Ibid.

On the other side, another senior think-tanker remarked that the EU countries still tended to keep their relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE on a good footing during that time.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, Qatar was seen as having made wise diplomatic decisions, which attracted the respect of the international community.

The EU response was also compared to those of other actors. According to the interviewees, the reaction of the West towards the Gulf crisis had two sides, so there are varying views when considering the positions of the EU and the US, as put by another senior think-tanker:

‘The EU has appreciated Qatar’s efforts on ending the crisis. Qataris worried that the EU would side with the Saudis. By contrast, the US is a “mixed bag”. Driven by Saudi Arabia, the White House remained indifferent to the blockade, while the State and Defence Departments were much aware of the blockade’s significance and outcomes; and appreciated Qatar’s political stance.’<sup>44</sup>

At the regional level, many of the interviewees frequently emphasized Turkey’s rapid involvement in the crisis, and its military presence, which abated the risk of other countries’ taking military action against Qatar. Turkey’s support is seen as a clear demonstration of loyalty and its commitment to Qatar’s security was described as strong and very telling. During the crisis, Turkey’s helpful role was highly appreciated, and its support was perceived as crucial to ease the Gulf crisis. It is apparent that a strategic partnership has grown between the two sides after the Arab Spring. Turkey is a prioritized regional partner, and the bilateral relations have had a positive impact on Turkey’s economy as well. A researcher mentioned that Turkey provides comfort for Qatar as an ally.<sup>45</sup>

It was further implied during the interviews that the country’s independent foreign policy has deepened political confrontations and has made it impossible to return to a unity in the Gulf. A senior-think tanker argued that the future of the Gulf will be driven by the emergence of new alliances cutting across the traditional factions:

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43 Interviewee 12: Academic, founding director of a research institute, male, Doha, January 2018.

44 Ibid.

45 Interviewee 2: Researcher, expatriate, male, Doha, January 2018.

‘Iraq and Turkey will take a big role on security. And if that happens, it will be good for Qatar. The GCC, which is dictated by Saudi Arabia, will probably dismantle; it may continue to exist but will not be functional.’<sup>46</sup>

It is viewed that the US will continue to be an important power in the region: ‘The US may still have hegemonic influence within 15–20 years if Gulf countries including Qatar adopt a diversification strategy at the economic, diplomatic, and military levels.’<sup>47</sup>

‘While continuing alliance with the US on one hand and having close relations with Turkey—especially on the security level—on the other hand, Qatar might find itself in a position as a potential bridge or mediator between the two. In case of a conflict between Turkey and the US, Qatar might help bridge the gap.’<sup>48</sup>

As for Iran, the Qatari Emir is seen to have established a good dialogue with the country, also during the Gulf crisis, although the bilateral relations are not expected to lead to an alliance as seen with Turkey. ‘Iran is a big key player in the region. Qatar has to get along well with Iran. The relations with Iran will be considered from a pragmatic perspective. Iran is not a threat as a regime, for Qatar.’<sup>49</sup>

Iran’s increasing role in the MENA region was mentioned several times during the interviews. A Qatari diplomat argued that Iran has mastered asymmetrical warfare tactics:

‘It is difficult to overcome Iran, yet it can be defeated by its own people. On the other side, Saudi Arabia assumes that they are powerful—more than their potential. There is high unemployment there. They are not integrated into the system of the international community, so they have nothing to lose.’<sup>50</sup>

It is also underlined that Qatar does not want to get involved in a war with Iran, and tries to establish a good dialogue for a number of reasons: (1) It could lead to regional chaos like the Iraqi war. Also, certain internal factors such as Iran’s being prone to decentralization—more so than

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46 Interviewee 11: Director of a research institute, male, Doha, January 2018.

47 Interviewee 4: Senior academic, male, Doha, January 2018.

48 Interviewee 6: Research analyst, male, Doha, January 2018.

49 Ibid.

50 Interviewee 1: Senior diplomat, male, Doha, January 2018.

Iraq—and its complex geography may add further challenges. (2) Qatar’s positive outlook for future relations with Iran. (3) Qatar is in favour of dialogue exchange as it has no national interest at stake.<sup>51</sup>

Moving on to the implications of the Gulf crisis, it was argued that Qatar was quite successful in turning a serious challenge into an opportunity: it improved societal solidarity, managed food security and adopted timely fiscal policies that prevented an economic crisis.<sup>52</sup> Despite the good management of the crisis, the blockade has socially and economically affected Qataris largely due to the travel blockade. Still, ‘this is our second independence’, a Qatari journalist said.<sup>53</sup>

Although the blockade is expected to continue at least another couple of years; it not seen as a threat but rather a chance for the country to diversify its economic and foreign relations including those with the EU:

‘The boycott [maybe] will be gone in 10 years and during this period; many close and diversified relationships could be developed at a diplomatic level. A set of complementary relations will be developed.’<sup>54</sup> ‘The EU did not lose its economic interest in the region, as defence and commercial deals continued in the aftermath of the crisis.’<sup>55</sup>

The blockade has also led to a domestic momentum for institutional change, as the senior think-tanker further posited:

‘It has reinforced the dynamics in Qatar; offering a chance to review the trade relations, to become less committed to the GCC, and to develop collaboration with Turkey and Iran. These achievements should be sustainable; otherwise, if the crisis ends within a month or so, Qatar would be back to its pre-crisis status quo.’<sup>56</sup>

Interviewees underlined that regional dynamics such as the Syrian conflict have also had an impact on the blockade. The blockade significantly increased Qatar’s investment in military equipment, yet a Qatari diplomat

51 Interviewee 12: Academic, founding director of a research institute, male, Doha, January 2018.

52 Interviewee 2: Researcher, expatriate, male, Doha, January 2018.

53 Interviewee 7: Editor-in-chief/journalist, male, Doha, January 2018.

54 Interviewee 11: Director of a research institute, male, Doha, January 2018.

55 Interviewee 4: Senior academic, male, Doha, January 2018.

56 Interviewee 11: Director of a research institute, male, Doha, January 2018.

highlighted how the weapons flow influences the feeling of security: ‘The idea of security is based on buying the most expensive weapons, however this does not make you powerful. This is true for the case in the Gulf.’<sup>57</sup>

Finally, it was added that regional political dynamics will shape Qatar’s foreign policy in that there are many actors on the ground, and the foreign policies of the Gulf states are generally ad-hoc and not long-term.

#### 2.4 *Perceptions on Arab uprisings, political Islam, and relations with the Mediterranean*

The elites in Qatar are inclined to analyse the regional developments as well as Qatar’s relations with external actors through the lens of the Gulf crisis. Since this has been a direct threat to the country’s survival, this tendency is warranted. Relations with the North African countries are no exception to this trend. In general, Qatar’s relations with Morocco and Tunisia are viewed as positive, though it is underlined that the Saudi influence is more visible in Morocco. Qatar’s large investments in Tunisia as well as in Jordan are a clear indicator of Qatar’s vision to become a key regional player, and its desire to develop its capabilities.

The fact that Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria did not show an anti-Qatar stance during the Gulf crisis is noted as positive:

‘There is political polarization/fragmentation in Tunisia, yet it is more or less stable compared to Libya, for example. Tunisians think they can deal with everyone. There are no major problems with North African countries; however, the inter-Arab dialogue is limited. Qatar’s view of Algeria takes its root from the two countries’ historical backgrounds. The relations with Morocco are also good, improving especially on an economic level. With Tunisia, there are disputes over the Muslim Brotherhood, however Qatar has continued to maintain diplomatic channels.’<sup>58</sup>

In the broader Mediterranean region, Qatar appears to have economic interests, as indicated by a Qatari diplomat.<sup>59</sup> Qatar has certain investment

57 Interviewee 1: Senior diplomat, male, Doha, January 2018.

58 Interviewees 1, 11, and 12. See also Kheireddine Batache, ‘Morocco and Qatar to Strengthen Their Ties’, in *Ecomnews Med*, 14 March 2018, <https://goo.gl/5Er6Uz>.

59 Interviewee 1: Senior diplomat, male, Doha, January 2018.

plans targeting the Mediterranean region, which are currently on the table.<sup>60</sup> However, the regulatory barriers and the economic imbalances faced in the Mediterranean, especially in relation to Spain and Italy, are certainly challenges to overcome. The oil issue is seen to be another factor when the Mediterranean is at stake.

There is a general consensus that the elites in Qatar do not hold a favourable view of the EU response to the Arab uprisings. It was argued that the Union did not develop a specific policy during that time. There were different messages from different countries and the Union's response to the uprisings remained under the influence of EU member states rather than originating with the Union itself.<sup>61</sup> Respondents highlighted the lack of a unified voice within the Union and its inability to address the varying expectations of Arab populations.

From the beginning of the Arab uprisings, Qatar adopted a policy of support for popular movements. In the Syrian conflict, Qatar had a similar reaction. Although relations with Bashar al-Assad had been unproblematic before the civil war broke out, Qatari officials swiftly began to adopt a policy of confrontation once it became clear that the regime would not follow a reform agenda but instead target the civilian population. Therefore, Qatar supported the opposition in Syria, initially in partnership with two other Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as well as Turkey. Qatar was the first country to close its embassy in Damascus and took a strong position within the Arab League, which suspended Syria's membership in the organization.

It should be noted that Qatar was in close co-operation with Turkey in offering financial aid to the opposition in Syria. The two countries, having previously agreed on Egypt and Libya, continued their natural co-operation by supporting opposition groups in their

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60 It is possible to trace the presence of Qatar in the Mediterranean at the economic level, such as by its investments in Spanish companies through the Qatari Investment Authority; as well as its financial support to Tunisia to strengthen its development. See 'Qatar Investment Authority Secures Majority Stake In IAG', in *The Corner*, 30 January 2015, <http://thecorner.eu/?p=43432>; and 'Qatar Emir Pledges \$1.25 Billion to Support Tunisia Economy', in *The Express Tribune*, 29 November 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/?p=1248061>.

61 Interviewee 1: Senior diplomat, male, Doha, January 2018.

struggle against al-Assad. However, since Qatar was never a military power in this equation, the country's influence was relatively limited where all other regional actors including Iran, Turkey, or Russia were militarily present on the ground. That is why the elite actors in Qatar emphasize the important role Qatar could play in supporting Syria's reconstruction financially, but also indicate the potential that the frightening extent of corruption in the country could subvert Qatar's interest in that role.

Asked about Qatar's stance towards political Islam within the context of the Arab uprisings, respondents did not label the Qatari ideological view towards political Islam as a radical one, and they hinted at certain overlaps between Qatar and the EU on this particular issue.

It was underlined that Emir Tamim has not been ideologically committed to political Islam in the way previous Emirs had been. The liberal and pluralist rhetoric adopted in the country following the Gulf crisis is seen as a clear example of this ideological stance. According to some interviewees, Europe is also aware of this ideological positioning and shows sympathy toward Qatar. In this direction, the respondents further raised that there is no ideological commitment to the Muslim Brotherhood:

'Political Islam is an important subject matter in Arab politics, yet in Qatar, it is not a major strand of politics, but sympathy exists towards it, especially towards the Arab and Muslim world. It is not seen a threat to the domestic order, either.'<sup>62</sup>

The same interviewee also noted that the EU has never declared the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization. Also, on Wahhabism, it tends not to be interpreted as missionary work as can be seen in Saudi Arabia:

'Qatar adopts more liberal attitudes and the country is more homogenous than Saudis'. The fact is that there are no real political or ethnic tensions in the country, which stems from the connectedness of the royal family.'<sup>63</sup>

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62 Interviewee 4: Senior academic, male, Doha, January 2018.

63 Interviewee 12: Academic, founding director of a research institute, male, Doha, January 2018.

### 2.5 Expectations for Qatar and its reform agenda

In Qatar, the culture of civil society is seen to be weak. Women's solidarity groups or other similar organizations are small and most of them are state-connected. However, following the blockade, it is argued that there have been improvements as some businessmen are beginning to engage and provide funding for civil society initiatives. The Emir's political attitudes after the crisis, including improvements on women's representation in political life, are also noted as quite positive: 'The Emir has appointed female members to the Shura Council. Qatar has also approved a draft property ownership law for foreigners'.<sup>64</sup> More reforms are also said to be on the way, as in 2019 Qatar will hold elections for the Shura Council for the first time in its history.

Interviewees argue that the current crisis can be an opportunity for internal reforms. At the domestic level, state institutions may become more efficient and sustainable with more effective state bureaucracy. The newly set up councils and ministries are mentioned as examples of positive democratization efforts. Notably, many citizens are state-employed and there is a proximity between the state and the public. Also, public occasions like marriages and funerals provide room for political participation.

'Doha gives some sort of more freedom of thought compared to other Gulf countries, where there is no place for free speech in politics; zero room for manoeuvre. Qatar is more open to civil society organization initiatives and investments in education and culture.'<sup>65</sup>

In 2017, Qatar's ruling elites introduced a law giving protection to foreign labourers who work as maids, cooks, cleaners, and nannies.<sup>66</sup> This was a long-awaited reform demanded by several human rights groups. Another reform being undertaken is to end the *kafala* system that applies to the low-income migrant population. This legally-mandated

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64 Ibid.

65 Interviewee 11: Director of a research institute, male, Doha, January 2018.

66 Qatar's new law on providing labour rights for domestic workers is a first in the GCC. See Noah Browning, 'Qatar Enacts Law to Protect Foreign Domestic Workers', in *Reuters*, 24 August 2017, <https://reut.rs/2g7NdgG>.

sponsorship system ties a foreign worker to a specific employer and does not allow that worker to freely change employers. Many migrant workers are trapped in slave-like conditions and are unable to leave when they do not receive their salary, since employers hold their passports and paperwork. However, these reform efforts at present are viewed as ineffective and superficial.<sup>67</sup>

Immigration reforms are highly crucial for investment policies. Qatar attracts a large number of foreign construction workers and when they leave the country, there is a subsequent change of the population's composition. As stated by an economic research analyst, 'Here, there is a need to increase local population and through private/public investments, in order to attract Qataris living abroad to return their country.'<sup>68</sup> He argued that Qatar should open itself to foreign investments through constructive policies: '[Qatar] has to figure out how to guarantee private investments, because capital accumulation does not make sense unless you have functional economic strategies'.<sup>69</sup>

Within its 2030 vision, Qatar opens up full company ownership to expatriate investors, a process that has been accelerated following the Gulf crisis. Qatar is also committed to improving the local business sector. An economist at a bank underlines that Qataris have realized the necessity to diversify the economic sectors in the country: 'However, the government should not put money into inefficient projects like agriculture; knowledge economy might make sense'.<sup>70</sup>

There is also demand for reforms that advance women's rights in order to create positive societal change. In the words of the research analyst, 'Incentives for the empowerment of women should be redesigned. Women are more active in empowerment compared to men.'<sup>71</sup> The research analyst also underlined the potential role women in Qatar can

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67 For a detailed analysis of Qatar's reforms, see Human Rights Watch, *Qatar: Year of Crisis Spurred Rights Reforms*, 18 January 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/node/313109>.

68 Interviewee 5: Economic research analyst, expatriate, male, Doha, January 2018.

69 Ibid.

70 Interviewee 9: Acting head economist at a bank, expatriate, male, Doha, January 2018.

71 Interviewee 5: Economic research analyst, expatriate, male, Doha, January 2018.

play to develop local businesses. It is argued that in Qatar, there is ‘big business of big families’.<sup>72</sup> However, if they want to be more efficient and attractive, they will need smaller local partners in the end: ‘Boosting SMEs is important to develop local businesses. Here, women should be encouraged [to join in business operations] as they have family networks, better knowledge of society, are active on social media and have the potential to operate SMEs’.<sup>73</sup>

It is believed that the reform agenda in Qatar will develop the country’s relations with the West and especially with the European Union. Qatar plans to engage in strategic diplomacy as the country continues to develop its economy in the future. As it was put by a senior think-tanker: ‘Qatar has choices ahead of it and the choice part is that Qatar should differentiate itself from other Gulf countries—such as on diversity and human rights. Qatar should engage more at a global level.’<sup>74</sup>

## Conclusion

Qatar’s institutional relations with the EU have been historically limited as the Union has approached the Gulf region through the diplomatic mechanisms established with the GCC. The Gulf crisis demolished the GCC alliance, and as a result the EU as an institution has become almost invisible in Qatar. Nevertheless, Qatar has traditionally maintained bilateral relations with EU member states, primarily engaged with the UK and France and more recently with Germany. Even though Brexit has created some confusion and concerns regarding the future of the Union, Qatar is committed to develop socio-economic ties with the EU and its member states in the future.

The blockade on Qatar has had a direct impact on almost all the issues related to domestic and foreign policy. The country’s elites see this

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72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Interviewee 11: Director of a research institute, male, Doha, January 2018.

traumatic situation as an opportunity for the country's future. First, Qatar has revised its existing alliances and replaced previous alliances such as the GCC mechanism with alternatives. Turkey represents one of the new alliances for Qatar as does Iran, which has always been a source of fear when the country was under Saudi influence. The US is still seen as the biggest security provider with no viable alternatives. Secondly, there is a reform agenda within the country that is characterized by a desire for increased pluralism and inclusivity. As the blockade continues, it is believed that Qatari ruling elites will introduce additional reforms that could make the country among the most liberal of the Arab monarchies.

The EU perception of Qatar is primarily based on a socio-economic agenda and the Union represents a source of attraction for the Qatari elites. The state expects visa-free travel for Qatari citizens who enjoy spending time in European capitals such as London and Paris. Despite that interest, there exists little knowledge of the EU or its institutions in Qatar's state bureaucracy. This stems mostly from the fact that Qatar has not been on the EU's foreign policy agenda since its relations with the country were conducted within the framework of the GCC. Now that the GCC has become almost obsolete, there is a need for the EU to develop a new approach toward the Arab monarchies in the Gulf, including Qatar.

The EU, like the rest of the world, was caught off guard by the suddenness of the Arab Spring. In Qatar, similar to other countries in MENA, there is consensus that the EU's response to this series of popular revolts was inadequate. Elites underline that the Union did not create a particular policy and its answer to the uprisings remained under the influence of single EU member states. The lack of a unified voice within the Union was seen as a clear demonstration of its inability to address the varying expectations of Arab people. That is why, politically speaking, the EU is mostly seen as a weak actor in a complicated neighbourhood. From now on, it is believed that the challenges facing Brussels require the implementation of a firm and determined common policy, which goes beyond the many divisions that floods of refugees arriving in Europe have exacerbated.

The Gulf region is passing through an existential crisis. There have always been ups and downs in the past, but the current crisis is unique mainly because the instability is of the Gulf's own making and secondly,

because people are generally quite pessimistic about a resolution in the near future. Elites in Qatar also share this view and underline that the Gulf crisis will not be resolved soon. As mentioned several times, Qatari ruling elites are trying to establish new alliances and design a more independent foreign policy in order to achieve the most benefit from this complex and difficult time. The EU does clearly represent a window of opportunity for Qatar as it tries to find new co-operation and trade channels that would make the country more autonomous, stable, and less vulnerable against the uncertainties of the Gulf region.

The latest co-operation arrangement signed in March 2018 between the European External Action Service and the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a clear indication of Qatar's new agenda of enhancing bilateral relations with the Union around areas of common interest. It is hoped that this arrangement will serve as the basis for greater political dialogue and intensified co-operation on specific areas of mutual interest, especially private sector development and research and innovation. In addition to these key areas of interest for Qatar, both sides can also co-operate in counterterrorism efforts as well as numerous regional issues, including the war in Syria, the Middle East Peace Process, Libya, and Iran.

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## Annex: List of Interviewees

- Interviewee 1: Senior diplomat, male, Doha, January 2018
- Interviewee 2: Researcher, expatriate, male, Doha, January 2018
- Interviewee 3: Research director, female, Doha, January 2018
- Interviewee 4: Senior academic, male, Doha, January 2018
- Interviewee 5: Economic research analyst, expatriate, male, Doha, January 2018
- Interviewee 6: Research analyst, male, Doha, January 2018
- Interviewee 7: Editor-in-chief/journalist, male, Doha, January 2018
- Interviewee 8: Think-tank member, male, Doha, January 2018
- Interviewee 9: Acting head economist at a bank, expatriate, male, Doha, January 2018

Interviewee 10: Economist at a bank, male, Doha, January 2018

Interviewee 11: Director of a research institute, male, Doha, January 2018

Interviewee 12: Academic, founding director of a research institute, male, Doha, January 2018